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nally, data were gathered relating to the modes of acquiring, exercising, validating, and conserving powers of prophylaxis, diagnosis, and therapy. Here, as in the other areas of data gathering, a necessary distinction was made between the perceptions of practitioners and those of their clients.

While the secular medical traditions of Ethiopia are exclusively oral, powerful cleric healers known as debteras have traditionally employed diagnositc, prophylactic, and therapeutic texts written in Ge'ez, the language of the Church, and in the vernacular. Numerous debtera texts gave been collected in the libraries of Europe and the United States, and valuable translations, most notably by Marcel Griaule, Deborah Lifchitz, and Stefan Strelcyn, have been published. These published translations, together with translations made in the field with the assistance of clerics, have been utilized in the writing of those sections of Chapter Four dealing with the debtera's medical texts.

Although the focus of this dissertation is limited to the region in which field research was conducted, it should not be overlooked that the Amhara share important cultural affinities with peoples, now largely Islamic, occupying lands extending from the eastern Mediterranean to the Persian Gulf.

The highlands of Begemder, Tigre, and Eritrea form

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*757 which is mainly responsible for the junior wosfat
*759 therapist to limit his therapy to simply providing the unprocessed medicaments.

*278 One of the remaining redundant pairs,
757 (Ikek:Kabiy:k:I) with (Ikek:Kabiy:k*:I) links two
• 869 brothers of Lemmariet, who obtained the therapy from a
[602] member of their mother's natal ambilineage core. The remaining redundant therapies are all traced to a single individual, Asfow (now deceased):

Therapy notation	Asfow's link to herbalist
(Koruba:Seci/Ateci:i:I+)	FaFa, via Asfow's first Wi
(Koruba:Seci/Ateci:i:I)	MoFa, via Asfow's second Wi
(Koruba:Seci:i:I+)	SiHu, Si is Asfow's second Wi
(Koruba:Seci:i:I)	FaSiHu, Fa is preceeding entry

Only in a minority of cases is a professional therapy transmitted to two or more residents of a parish who may practice it in comeptition with one another. Asfow did this by transmitting his therapy to three individuals whose geneaological ties to one another proved remote enough to preclude the tacit agreement which might enable closer kinsmen to vest exclusive professional rights in a single individual. Asfow's actions can be traced to two considerations. First, this therapy has low commercial value; it has a poor reputation for effectiveness, and it addresses an acute ailment, koruba (a fatal pox). Because a kuruba episode is character-

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ized by a duration of only twenty-four hours from first prodromes to its termination, clients can be expected only from the parish and its immediate environs. Since clients of the herbalist's own parish are rarely expected to pay for any but the cure of a Medhaniyt Awakiy, the practice of this koruba therapy is likely to amount to little more than a modest presentation given by the herbalist.

In contrast, Nikersa:Kitabiy:A:I is a valuable therapy directed against a serious but not acute ailment. [778] This therapy consists of an amulet containing a variety of exotic materials, and of instructions for washing the affected area. The therapy was brought to Tikurmidir by Berey, the second wife of Asfow. Once Berey's eldest son, Gitahun, reached adolescence, his mother used him as her medhaniyt korac for gathering the amulet materials and as her apprentice in the manufacutre of the "pharmacologically" elaborate amulet container. Later, when Gitahun's own eldest son, Ayialuw, reached adolescence, he replaced his father as Berey's medhaniyt korac. After Berey's death, Gitahun, then in his fifties, began his practice of the nikersa therapy, retaining Ayialuw as medhaniyt korac and apprentice. Had the therapy addressed a more common ailment, it is likely that Gitahun would have begun practicing it prior to his mother's death, initially serving neighbors and kinsmen, while

*278 *757 • [869] his mentor restricted her professional services to clients from outside the parish.

Among the herbalist therapies practiced in Tikurmidir and Lemmariet, there are, predictably, those which provide successful cures or satisfactory palliatives for certain non-serious ailments (particularly, wosfat, kosov, kurtimat, and wuwgat). Since this repertoire of disease-name specialties is found in most Amhara hamlets, a client generally need go no farther than a hamlet herbalist for treatment. Beyond these, the assortment of therapies * [192] practiced in any hamlet is adventitious; for example, epidemiologically, pharmacologically, and prognostically it is no more explicable for kuntina (leprosy) and koruba (fatal pox) therapies to be practiced in Tikurmidir than for timan anise (elephantiasis) or weresiyn (typhus) to be found in their stead. The character of a particular assortment oftherapies within a region has important professional consequences for the herbalists of this area. [628] Where an herbalist practices a therapy in the absence of redundant therapies, he can expect to attract clients from the entire area of his exclusive practice, even though his therapy may be a weak one. Thus, the contrast between a therapy serving only clients of the herbalist's hamlet and a therapy serving a wider population cannot always be explained on the basis of differences of healing power, but in many cases may also depend upon whether

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*793 and, second, the exercise of political prerogative,
[642] delegated by the state, with which to bestow favors and to direct sanctions. The debtera seeks power elsewhere, for he is a man without fields, kinfolk, or politically significant ties. It is in this quest, that he travels the path of apparent contradiction and real compromise, a path which ends in an attempt to wrest power from satanic sources, unmediated by any moral authority, and to legitimize it sui generis.

This chapter describes the debtera's life history, in terms of the sequence of recruitment criteria which an individual must meet before becoming a debtera, the decisions which he must make between alternative career paths, the knowledge, skills, and power which are acquired by the man who follows the path to debtera-hood.

Deferred to the concluding chapter is a comparison between the debtera-healer and the secular practitioner, and a description of the culmination of the debtera's quest for power, the satanic contract.

LEAVING THE PARISH

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* [192] Among the services provided at the parish church is instruction in the Amhara syllabary (fidal), and the ecclesiastical subjects required for ordination as a deacon (diyakon) and, subsequently, as a priest (keys).

Literacy, per se, is not the goal of enrollment, but is percieved rather as a pre-requisite for studying the Gospels (wangél), the psalter (daviyt), and a variety of prayers, pursuant to participating in the Mass (kidasiy) as an ecclesiastic of the parish.

Within a parish, only a minority of households send boys to the church school; these are generally ristenña households, each sending a single priest-candidate in any one generation. Because attendance at the school precludes shepherding, the common lot of young boys, the student's family must find a substitute shepherd for him; a younger sibling is usually available for this task, but, if not, a collateral or even non-kinsman may be obtained. Indeed, the age at which a boy begins his studies (generally, between seven and thirteen years) is often determined by when this substitute can be found. The parish school is suspended, however, during periods of intensive agricultural activities, of harvesting, threshing, and winnowing.

Although considerations of piety influence a man to seek ordination for his son, self-interest generally dominates. The achievement of priesthood validates a family's claims to church lands (yimoskol mariet). If the neophyte's father is himself a priest, his son's ordination means freedom from bothersome performances in the Mass. If the father is not a priest, but anyway

*793 423 593 621 554 holds priest land because he is a risteña of a founding ambilineage of the parish, his son's ordination means that the lands or payments until now turned over to a stranger priest (in lieu of a risteña priest) can be kept within the family.

*793 621 581 [839] *[192] [586] The durability of the ties which bind a priest to his natal parish are reinforced by his marriage. Most peasants are married in a "secular union" (yaluwkurban migabat), which excludes neither divorce not extra-marital sexual adventures.[21] The priest, on the other hand, must be married, and it can be only as a "communion marriage" (bikurban migabat), an indissoluble sacrament of the Church which commits the spouses to sexual fidelity and forbids even remarriage. Thus, the priest is [572] cut off from carousing in the talla houses of the town. He must instead confine his comraderie to the courtyard of the parish church, separated from the persons and experiences which might otherwise lead him away from his parish fields.

*793 621 • 869 Thus enrollment in the parish school is conceived

[21]Two other forms of marriage, associated with a man on travels or living in town, are yidomoz migabat (which lasts for a contractual period) and yilijinat (providing only exclusive sexual rights to the woman).

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*793 621 • 869 241 as a means for discussing and strengthening a risteña family's economic and social interests within the parish. There are two conspicuous exceptions. Should a boy bear [732] a physical disability so severe that he will be unable to perform the basic subsistence activities of Amhara men, particularly plowing, he may be enrolled in the parish school as a prelude to a non-agricultural career beyond his natal parish. The alternatives are few. [463] work as an artisan is appropriate for Muslim and Falasha, [441] but shameful for an Amhara; while employment as a mer- [563] chant is less objectionable, the peasant is generally without the necessary skills, contacts, and capital; military service is beyond his abilities; thus, only the Church and government remain. Regarding the Church, the priesthood is closed to him, since a priest must be physically whole, and capable of standing unassisted during [647] the performance of the Mass. The remaining ecclesiastical and government career choices assume that a boy will achieve literacy at the parish school and subsequently *793 depart from his natal community. The second exception 621 to the local focus of the parish school, is the small 869 number of boys who are offspring of debtera-teachers ser- 593 ving in parish churches. The ties of these men to their parishes-of-residence are usually only professional, and they are rarely risteñas, it is moreover their professional ethos which influences them to seek an extensive

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ecclesiastical education for their sons.

However, it is not only the cripple and blind, or the landless sons of full-time ecclesiastics who find in the parish school the means to leave the agricultural community. In reality, they constitute only a minority of the boys who leave the parish. For among those who are the physically-whole offspring of ristenas, there are some who find objectionable the prospect of a life-time as a farmer, subordinated to a father's wishes and interests, and bound to a single woman. Where such inchoate dissatisfaction exists, it may be further stimulated by the parish teacher, particularly if he is a debtera.

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The teaching at the parish school is performed by a local priest or monk[22] who is competent in the required subjects. In the absence of a suitable local man, a stranger monk or debtera is employed. The debtera is a Church scholar of sorts, who also leads the chanting of the liturgy during the performance of the Mass. He is an important model for the restive student, for his life provides an alternative and challenge to the social

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[22] A "monk" (manakwosa) is a mature unmarried deacon, a widowed priest, or a layman who has renounced material acquisitions and has vowed celibacy. Only the first two are literate and, therefore, potential teachers. There are, in addition, anchorites (bahatahwy).

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expectations that have gone unquestioned by other members of the boy's community. Significantly, the debtera is observed to enjoy a wide range of acquaintances beyond the peasants of the parish; he is a man known to have travelled throughout the northern highlands, to study at famous churches and monasteries, to visit great towns and markets. Beyond this, he is a man who has acquired power and prestige while free from the constraints of parental authority, as a member of an association of equals living beyond the bounds of the rigid status hierarchy of traditional Ethiopia.

For many students, it is the prospect of ending their studies rather than their wanderlust which they find discomforting. As a priest, a man is unlikely to progress in his knowledge of the liturgy and the scriptures, for he is neither likely to find a suitable teacher in his home region, nor are his agricultural, ecclesiastical and familial responsibilities likely to allow him the leisure to participate in such studies. What is more, the debtera-teacher, in casual remarks, paints the priesthood as a poor choice for the bright student; he is neither loath to comment upon what he considers priestly ignorance, nor is he reluctant to encourage his better students in the fulfillment of what he regards as their superior abilities.

The debtera provides a second service for the dis-

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*793 • 869 sident student by familiarizing him with the network of churches, monasteries, and academies which constitute the stations along which the student will progress once he leaves his natal parish.

*[192] The completion of psalter (dawiyd) is frequently considered a sign of the student's readiness to be tested by the local bishop (abuna) for certification as a deacon. The boy is fifteen or sixteen by this time, and the recipient of church fields in return for his performance in the Mass; with his marriage a few years later, he becomes a priest. The boy bent on a debtera career generally waits until he has been certified a deacon, since this is considered a prerequisite for enrollment in his first debtera school.

*793 869 621 593 166 With the exceptions already cited, a man is certain to oppose his son's departure, since, sentiment aside, the boy's move usually represents a significant economic loss. When he leaves his natal parish, he does so secretly, journeying to a distant debtera, in order to conceal his new residence from his father. Thus, he begins his debtera career without kinfolk or friends to protect him, without resources to meet his subsistence needs.[23]

[871] [178] [369] [23] Since liberation, government (secular) schools have offered an alternative to an ecclesiastical education pursuant to government employment. The effects of this have been limited, however, since only an estimated 3% pass beyond the eighth grade (ESA 1965:198). In addition children of townsmen and non-Amhara are disproportionately represented in these classes.

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THE STUDENT LIFE

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The debtera's ecclesiastical studies are divided into three broad categories: 1) Kiyne, versifications in the form of conundrums; 2) subjects relevant to the celebration of the Mass, such as zeyma (liturgical music), akwawkum (liturgical dance), and a variety of liturgical chants (e.g., soma digua, songs and hymns of Lent); and 3) tergum, scriptural interpretation. Ideally, a student spends sufficient time under a master (memher) in each area to attain proficiency according to the standards of his mentor. In addition, a debtera is expected to acquire mastery of one subject so that he may, in turn, offer instruction in it.

The Kiyne Curriculum. Most often, these studies begin with kiyne. In the kiyne-drills, the student acquires the knowledge of Ge'ez, the language of the Church, and the parent tongue of Amharic and Tigrinya. In his ecclesiastical studies at the parish school, the student had learned a bit of Ge'ez vocabulary, but nothing of its grammar (irabata). Attendance at the kiyne school is believed to further instill habits of diligence and concentration, and the acuity of mind necessary for his later studies; further, kiyne studies are a prerequisite for versifications which the debtera performs during Church services.

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The routine of the kiyne school varies little from day to day. After the sun has set, the kiyne master comes before his students, who number between fifteen and forty; he extemporizes a kiyne, perhaps one praising the Almighty, or demeaning a ganel. This the student memorizes, and over the next twenty-four hours, he composes an original kiyne to match the intent and subtleties incorporated in the master's own. The next night, the master again engages his students, who offer up their kiyne for a critique by the master. Once more, the master provides a kiyne for emulation on the following night. Although kiyne can be composed in Amharic as well as Ge'ez, masters usually versify only in the liturgical language, which the student learns concomitant to the exploration of kiyne.

Anxieties and Dangers at the Kiyne School. During his stay at the kiyne academy, the student is faced with serious challenges to achieving professional goals and maintaining physical well-being. Students consider the kiyne curriculum to be very difficult, and even the most gifted student cannot attain acceptable proficiency in less than two or three years of continuous and conscientious application. The more ordinary student can look forward to five or more years at this particularly dif-

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ficult task.[24] In addition to the problem of mastering the subleties of kiyne (a problem often exacerbated by a master's indirection), the student is confronted with the prospect of memorizing the great amounts of scriptural and liturgical information.

Initially, the novice student is warmly received by his peers, who refer to him as "younger brother", and offer him assistance in establishing himself, and learning the curriculum. The atmosphere of helpfulness soon gives way to one of competition, as the established students come to regard the new boy as a rival for the master's personal instruction and encouragement. Although overt friendliness persists, the relations between a youth and most of his fellow students are underwritten by intense suspicion and rivalry.

[877] [875] The master does not distribute his assistance equitably, but plays favorites, according to differences in students' abilities as well as personally conceived

[24] Kiyne students are, in general, drawn from among the most promising students of the parish school. Even so, the curriculum sometimes proves too difficult, and the students may seek out a kiyne master practicing an easier "school" of kiyne. Among kiyne students studying in Gondar, the gonj kiyne was reputed to be appreciably more difficult than wosera kiyne (both named after Ethiopian monasteries).

criteria. His personal interest means to the student rapid advancement through the curriculum, dining at the master's table, and enjoying privileged information of a non-ecclesiastical nature. Without his patronship, a student is committed to years of uncertainty and physical misery, scraping to meet his subsistence needs, paying his "tuition" in demeaning services, such as gathering the master's wood and tilling his garden, and in deferential performances, particularly washing the master's feet and those of his visitors.

The kiyne student is further troubled by the many ailments which are his lot. He lives, with one or two of his mates, in a wretched lean-to of twigs and wild grasses, which proves to be poor protection against the cold winter rains. Often he owns only the toga on his back, and it, like him, remains unwashed for the duration of the long dry season. Thus, ikek (scrofula) becomes his badge, and kurtimat (joint pains) and weba (fever) his recurrent companions. The student's diet is his special concern, since it conspicuously lacks the combination of wholesome wot (stew) and injera (pancake-like bread) necessary to sustain good health. He obtains most of his food by begging in the town and local hamlets, where he generally receives scraps of stale injera bread, always inadequate and potentially pathogenic (i.e., likift bearing, threatening fever and

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severe abdominal pain). The wot he eats is invariably the humblest type, aliyca, lacking the cayenne-based ingredient (berberiy) necessary to man and digestive wosfat. His injera is made of pulses instead of proper cereals, and often he has nothing but a handful of parched grain (kolow) with which to satisfy his hunger and truculent

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wosfat. In addition to persistent abdominal complaints (yihod himem), students are often afflicted with dafint (night-blindness) which is particularly stressful in the context of the student's nocturnal activities.

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There is also danger from animals, the vicious and often rabid hamlet dogs, which plague him as he begs; from ganels which gather outside the church yard waiting to suffocate him in his sleep, to tempt him to sacrilege with their calls just as they tempted Saint Basil, to waylay him when he goes beyond the church yard for nocturnal urination.

The Growth of Mercantile Interests. With the exception of those few students who enjoy the kiyne master's patronage, or who receive parental support, the young scholars must periodically interrupt the course of study for excursions into the lowlands in order to meet their

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subsistence needs. In early September, after the rains have ended and the countryside is covered with verdure, kiyne students journey to the kola lands to gather the wild gramta grass. The gramta must be sun dried for

*793 869 222 five weeks before it is ready to be woven into a tsifit, a food hamper and table around which the Amhara meal is eaten. Because the students cannot afford so long a hiatus from their studies, the grasses are dried only a week or so, in order to lighten them for the trip back [735] to the highlands. During their stay in the lowlands, the students support themselves by begging food from local farmers. Enterprising students often gather twice the amount of gramta they can carry, leaving the surplus to be taken up to the highlands in January.

*793 869 The gramta is brought to the student's hut at the kiyne school for storage and drying. Although the stu- [442] dents are anxious to sell immediately upon drying, both price and demand are low then, since the weavers, peasant [286] women, have no leisure for tsifit making until March. In * [192] the meanwhile, the student makes either traditional umbrellas of gramta for sale at the regional market, or seleyen, shrouds which he sells in the churchyard to mourners.

[434] Students also beg crops, a portion of which they consume and the remainder of which is sold at market. For a four week period, during October and November, the student begs a traditional double handful of pulses from farmers. During a two to three month period from February to April, students beg cereals and other crops (especially, cayenne). Because the amounts of produce

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obtained are often considerable (100 kilos and more), arrangements must be made for obtaining a donkey.

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However great his needs may be, a student cannot expect to participate in all of these activities, since this would leave insufficient time for his kiyne studies. However, gramta gathering and pulse begging are sometimes both engaged in during a single year.

Thus, the young debtera student finds himself transported from the benign enviornment of his natal parish to one in which only self-reliance and ressourcefulness can secure his chosen goals and maintain his physical well-being. Ultimately, he must make a bitter choice

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between professional and material satisfaction. The profits from gramta sales, and the foodstuffs he has begged would much ameliorate his misery. Yet, in spite of his pressing subsistence requirements, the student sets aside only a minor portion of his profits for these needs. He exchanges most of these goods for money, which he retains as a fluid and durable capital with which to purchase necessary professional articles (mainly books) and to support his future commercial ventures. During the years of his kiyne studies, his assets accumulate at the rate of perhaps E$25. per annum.[25]

[25] A significant sum where per capita gross national product is E$116. (EAS:134); E$1.=U.S.$0.40.

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441 The Alternative Career Paths. In choosing between
• [869] material and professional interests, some men forsake
*[793] their erstwhile ecclesiastical goals altogether, to apply in secular occupations (particularly as scribes and merchants) the skills that they have acquired or perfec-
*[192] ted during their student days. Exemplary among these is the kibe (butter) merchant. Occasionally, profits accumulated by gathering and begging are invested in the purchase of lowland butter and the means for transporting it to highland markets. Profits earned from kibe trading are sometimes sufficient to promise a standard of living which exceeds that of the peasants with whom the student trades. The student who yields to the temptations of a full-time trading career generally establishes an annual cycle in which a portion of his kibe profits are reinvested in livestock for subsequent sale at regional markets.

*793 A second category of students reverses these priori-
869 ties, and disregards non-ecclesiastical goals altogether.
433 Such students believe that, for themselves, it is faith in the Almighty which must sustain them in their travail. Thus, even excursions into the lowlands are re-
*[192] placed by exclusively ecclesiastical activities. Subsistence needs are met by copying Church books for resale, participating in the Mass in return for a portion of the grain tithes given to the church, and dining at baptisms and annual memorial feasts (fehitat). In

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addition, he blesses houses against ganels with readings from appropriate books of the Church, and sprinkles the house with water he has sanctified with his reading and spittle.

Finally, there is the largest category of students, those who choose the path of compromise and abinet. It is from their ranks that the debtera-healer emerges.

THE ABINET WORKS: PROPHYLAXIS AND THERAPY

Abinet are a class of recondite works directed at the satisfaction of some personal desire; their efficacy is obtained wholly or in large measure by invoking the assistance of super-humans (most often of the Church, but sometimes ganels), usually in contexts beyond those permitted by the Church. Abinet subjects include therapeutic performances (medhaniyt ina digam), and prophylactic amulets (kitab), divinatory texts (awdunigist), academic (timhirt) abinet, other inoffensive commercial works destructive works sending sickness and other misfortunes (kifat), and techniques for forcing the appearance and cooperation of ganels (ganel gelac).

Table eight indicates the constituent techniques of each category of abinet. The remaining paragraphs of this section consider those abinet works which address the therapeutic and prophylactic interests of the deb-

tera. They are described, in terms of their constituent elements and operational goals.

"Herbal" therapies. Pharmacologically, the debtera's therapies are, with an exception, indistinguishable from those of the secular herbalists. Indeed, where possible, the debtera obtains new therapies from obliging secular therapists, setting them down in a book he keeps for this purpose (yisowat bimem medhaniyt meshav, or hivri'i isowat). In contrast to the therapies practiced by secular herbalists, however, the debtera often supplements otherwise prosaic therapies with exotic, non-botanical ingredients (for example, owl's wing, hair from a lion's mane, blood of sheep's spleen), often employed in fumitories and libations.

Digam and Kitab. The digam is a syncretic invocation constructed from passages extracted from the Old Testament (particularly Psalms), the New Testament (particularly the Gospels), zeyma (the litanies of the Mass), and devotional books dedicated to the saints (the lives of the Saints, the Images of the Saints); asmat, magical power derived from the secret names of Jesus and the Almighty; and requests for specific assistance.

From an operational point of view, each digam communicates five messages. 1) The digam indicates the supernaturals to whom the appeal is directed. An address

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782 supplicant's parish. Prayers to the saints ask intervention with the Almighty on the supplicant's behalf, and thank the saints for fulfilling previous requests. Although prayers are not formalized, a specific request often takes the form of a three-fold appeal during a single session, first addressing the appropriate saint, then Jesus, and finally the Almighty.

ACQUIRING ABINET

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• 869 A boy rarely begins his debtera career with the conscious intention of learning abinet. His first studies are acquired almost inadvertently, and subsequent abinet are obtained only gradually. Yet, the types of abinet which he eventually acquires are never adventitiously determined. As he collects abinet throughout his professional career, the debtera is continually guided by the ways in which he perceives and weighs his instrumental and moral interests in these studies, and by the degree to which he is constrained by the character of his professional capital. Instrumentally, a distinction is made between abinet which directly satisfy some immediate personal needs of the debtera, and those works which enable the debtera to provide a service for others without transmitting technical knowledge of the abinet at the same time. Morally, abinet are

judged directly according to their offensiveness to the Church, and indirectly according to the availability of morally more acceptable alternatives. Professionally, the acquisition of abinet is guided by the quality and size of the debtera's capital, and of his ability to utilize abinet which are available to him.

The First Abinet. With few exceptions, a student's first abinet acquisitions are herbalist therapies and complementary digams. These early therapies address the most persistent threats of his environment, ikek (scabies), seal (cough), and kurtimat (joint pains). In addition, the student frequently obtains the recipe for a stimulant which ostensibly increases his acuity for learning kiyne.

These first abinet studies are generally gifts, since a student rarely possesses anything beyond deference and abjectness with which he can appeal to a potential donor. He has two sources from which he can obtain this knowledge. The first is a gwadeña or sympathetic balinjera. Among a student's fellows, he has a single special friend, whom he calls gwadeña. The gwadeña is his constant companion, who begs for ego when the latter is too sick to get his own food; he is completely trustworthy, and, with the exception of his money reserves gained from gramta sales and the like, whatever he possesses is at ego's disposal. The relationship is sym-

metrical; it is also characteristically brittle, and rarely lasts beyond attendance at the kiyne school. A student's balinjeras are, literally, his mess-mates. They form an exclusive group of peers, reliable confidants pledged to cooperation. Beyond the circle of balinjeras, all students are implicitly towdaderiys (rivals). Between both gwadeñas and balinjeras favors are expected to be freely given and no formal accounting kept, although the latter are less committed to sharing than are the former. Because the new boy's gwadeña and balinjera are, like himself, in the first two years of the kiyne curriculum, the abinet repertoire of either consists of few studies, and these with little or no magical content. Ego's second source of abinet is an older, more knowledgeable student, who has been made aware of the novice's difficulties, and is willing to help. The relationship between the donor and recipient here is perceived as an exchange between radat (benefactor) and taraj (beneficiary). The new boy is abject, he is without power, and faces immediate dangers and difficulties. By his gift, the donor dramatizes a status difference between himself and novices in general, differences based on the culturally significant contrast between power and dependency. The recipient, by his deferential behavior, validates the donor's self-image.

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Students who are more advanced in abinet studies consider the novice's acquisitions to be trivial and inocuous, because their goals are modest and they lack significant asmat. The young kiyne student, however, puzzles over whether these studies involve the coercion of supernaturals of the Church, instead of the humble and supplicatory attitude he wishes to express. Thus, the student often grows uneasy concerning these first acquisitions, and many, unable to reconcile their material and moral interests, go no further in their abinet studies. For the others, however, the pragmatic advantages of the abinet continue to stimulate their acquisitive interests. Once more, the student regards his powerlessness, his lack of mundane protectors and less controversial alternatives, to be particularly important; here, he considers it to legitimize the use of minor abinet. The student supports this perspective by emphasizing that the abinet are confined to his own immediate needs, and never used as a commercial service for others. Finally, by participating in the Mass and ecclesiastical scholarship, he expects to mitigate any taint acquired through these abinet activities.

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After one or two excursions into the lowlands, the young student who has already accomodated himself to the use of personal abinet comes to intensify his interest in prophylactic works, particularly digams. He seeks pro-

a blank space is left on each kitab, to be filled in later with the client's name. In general, the student initially sells kitabs to the lowlands to assist him in gathering agricultural products. The kitabs are purchased with either crops or services, and only infrequently with money. The peasant's services include recommending the student's kitabs to his neighbors, safe storage of the goods which the student has collected, and lending draught animals to bring the student's sacks up to the highlands. Sometimes, enterprising students arrange their visits in order to obtain payment in cotton, a relatively valuable product which debtera students are unable to obtain otherwise.

The student's experience selling kitabs in the lowlands has a significant effect on the course of his subsequent abinet career. First, his abinet interests are redirected. His previous acquisitions were abinet which served an immediate personal interest, and whose commercial value was adventitious. These commercial successes, however small-scale, frequently stimulate the student to obtain abinet which have an exclusively commercial value. Interest in personally useful abinet by no means ends during this period, however; often it is accelerated by the student's changing attitudes to the practice of abinet. There is a tendency to now perceive his moral interests as less opposed to these works than he had pre-

*787 *793 869 viously conjectured. Concomitantly, he renders these works morally acceptable by emphasizing their inoffensive goals and the divine and untainted sources of their abinet powers. Thus, he seeks more specialized academic abinet, from among those studies which enable him to learn quickly, or retain what he has learned, or extemporize well, or master any one of the ecclesiastical subjects of the debtera's curriculum.

*787 *793 869 437 Second, the student's commercial success often convinces him to give up entirely his earlier economic activities. In part, he is persuaded by the economic rewards of writing kitabs, since the profits can equal those obtained from selling kibe, while requiring neither the great capital outlay nor capital risk which characterizes kibe trading. Equally significant is the young man's pride in his publicly acknowledged abinet powers. He begins now to consciously assume a new identity as a self-sufficient manipulator of human and supernatural forces, a self-image which contrasts so obviously with the mendicant and passive character of his earlier years.

Third, he is able to accelerate the accumulation of a modest reserve of money. With this, he can purchase relatively specialized abinet, generally from fellow students who already own important studies. Before this time, the student could obtain relatively valuable abinet only from a knowledgeable debtera who was prepared to act

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as his radat. In practice, this debtera is usually the student's memher (ecclesiastical teacher), since the student cannot simultaneously serve two debteras, the memher and an abinet teacher, without offending the pride of both. Occasionally an enthusiastic collector of abinet may serve under a debtera in order to learn only abinet. Under these circumstances, both student and teacher maintain the pretext that the abinet collector is but another of the debtera's ecclesiastical scholars. In both situations, the abinet subject is learned only gradually, as the radat releases it, secret by secret, over a period of weeks or even months. The student, for his part, may be expected to provide confidential assistance in support of the debtera's abinet activities (sometimes involving kifat, offensive abinet), to act as his mentor's medhaniyt korac, or, less often, to provide substantial agricultural services, such as ploughing.

As a debtera student grows older and advances in his ecclesiastical studies, he finds it progressively easier to acquire new abinet studies. By then, he has travelled extensively over the network of monasteries and famous churches which are scattered over the northern plateau. In the course of these travels, he has made the acquaintance of many abinet-practicing debteras, and consequently a great variety of abinet studies have become potentially available to him. At the same time, he

is better able to obtain new abinet, since his own growing repertoire increases the possibility of arranging abinet exchanges with other debteras. Moreover he is better equiped to utilize them; he has learned much of the Ethiopian herbal pharmacopeia, and is able to identify botanicals by the Ge'ez nomers with which they are frequently designated in the recipes of abinet therapies and kitabs. Similarly, his mastery of Ge'ez makes possible the acquisition of complex digams.

In addition to acquiring individual recipes, debtera-healers also seek out encyclopaedic treatices. These are inventories of recipes, bearing Ge'ez titles such as "book of medicine for diseases for all parts of the body" (metshafe medhaniyt lekwiylown deweyate akalat). In these books, recipes are grouped according to diseases; the diseases are, in turn, classified according to the part of the body that they affect, arranged from head to feet. Stefan Strelcyn (1965), after close examination of four such manuscripts, has commented on the substantial uniformity of their contents and the remarkable similarities which they share with the third and fourth books of Avicenna's Canon of Medicine.

While such treatises contain hundreds of recipes, their significance for the practice of Abyssinian medicine is limited by the character of their pathogenic interests. As seen by his clients, the debtera's thera-

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*787 those he gives. The relative value of an abinet study
*793 is weighed against criteria recognized by both princi-
437 pals, although verbalized by neither during their nego-
tiations. These criteria refer to the study's goals,
its constituent elements, and its efficacy. 1) Criteria
* regarding goals enable ego to assess the commercial
[192] value of alter's study, if it is effective. Studies
whose goals involve issues of life and death, or serious
physical impairment, and studies with offensive intent
(kifat), are valued above those characterized by inessen-
tial or benign goals. A study whose goals are not or-
dinarily addressed by abinet or secular works is valued
over those made redundant by widely disseminated works.
A study which deals with a common interest of the deb-
tera's public is valued greater than one which addresses
an unusual concern. 2) Regarding constituent elements,
an abinet study is valued if its digam contains magical
names (asmat), but it is derogated if the digam simply
replicates materials available in ecclesiastical texts.
A study which calls for ingredients which are reasonably
accessible is valued more than one calling for rare items.
3) Finally, a study which works by true magic, asmat, is
valued over one which relies on mithat, a trick or illu-
* 759 sion simulating the effects of asmat.
*756 Comparison with Secular Medical Capital. Rarely
• 869 does a layman acquire any disease name specialty beyond

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those few he inherits. Additional acquisitions are discouraged for several reasons. First, the exchange of medical knowledge with other healers is difficult to arrange. A layman is unlikely to find another secular healer whose medical specialty he desires and who desires [437] one of the few disease name specialties he owns. Thus, it is generally cattle or money which must be exchanged for medical knowledge. Such purchases are relatively expensive, since the gain is only a minor increment in prestige and the tenuous possibility of earning modest material rewards after an extended period of professional obscurity. Further, the layman has available to him alternative forms of investment (mainly land, labor, and livestock), whose utilization is more consistent with the ethos of the Amhara peasant, and more remunerative (in prestige and material rewards) than the practice of new therapies.

The secular healer (particularly the medhaniyt awakiy) is reluctant to part with professional knowledge, even when a reasonable price is offered. Unlike the abinet capital of debteras, medical capital dissipates as it is "spent". When debteras exchange subjects, neither considers the other a rival in the specialties which they exchange. Eventually, their paths are bound to part, as one or the other continues his travels over the Coptic highlands. Moreover, a debtera is not known

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for specific works, since his public reputation rests upon his access to generic powers. Instead, he is recognized by his public as being either "strong" or "weak"; if he is reputed to be "strong", a potential client assumes that he is competent in a broad range of maladies. In contrast, the professional reputation of the lay healer is tied to a specific ailment, just as he himself is tied to a specific locality, as the sedentary cultivator of ambilineage fields. Since a layman's medical reputation is fixed in space, potential purchasers of his medical knowledge are drawn from among his potential clients. Thus, by sharing his medical knowledge with another secular healer, the lay practitioner establishes a potential rival and dilutes the economic and social advantages of his practice.

Communicating the Debtera's Power. When the secular healer inherits a therapy, he inherits a professional reputation along with it, as his public grows aware of the transmission of the disease name specialty and herbalist grade. For the debtera, the situation is very different; his abinet acquisitions are "anonymous". Without the kinship and parish networks that his secular counterpart enjoys, the debtera must establish his healing abilities for his public de novo. The first two or three decades of his professional life are characterized by continual changes of residence, as he pursues his studies

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and moves from one unremunerative and confining ecclesiastical position to another. Only later does he settle down, after he has acquired a commercially adequate abinet repertoire, and has realised his ecclesiastical goals, as a monher with a following of students. It is, however, in the relative anonymity of a town that he inevitably establishes himself.[43] In the town, the debtera can maintain, with temerity, his identity as a zanel-puller, and can receive his clients in confidence, free from the conventional morality and inquisitive eyes of parish folk. Placed in the town, the debtera maximizes his public. First, he serves the relatively affluent townsfolk with important commercial services, enabling them to best rival tradesmen and talla houses or mead hall proprietors, to magically attract customers, and to beguile superiors. Second, he makes his services available to the thousands of peasants drawn to the town's weekly markets, its ecclesiastical institutions, and its fleshpots.

In the task of communicating his professional exis-

[43] In 1966, of the approximately forty-five debtera-healers residing in Gondar, four were awakiy debteras (two others had died during the preceeding four years). Beyond the Gondar enviorns, the closest awakiy debtera lived in Amba Giyorgis town.